**RESOLUTION 2020-05**

**Regarding Improvements to the Vote-By-Mail Ballot-Marking System in Ohio**

WHEREAS, since 2018 registered blind or visually impaired voters in Ohio have.   been able to use the access technology with which they are familiar to mark the printed absentee ballot privately and independently using a computer, smartphone, or tablet; an Internet connection; and a printer; and

WHEREAS, under the current system blind or visually impaired voters must request the electronic absentee ballot ahead of time and then wait for days or even weeks to receive an email with a link to their ballot; and

WHEREAS, Ohio voters who requested an accessible absentee ballot and who did not receive the ballot in a timely manner have sometimes had to contact their county Board of Elections before receiving their ballot; and

WHEREAS, the ubiquitous nature of the Internet, combined with a wide variety of electronic content-delivery systems, has reduced the use of printers in our society—so much that printers are often not found in today's homes; and

WHEREAS, unless they own or have convenient access to a printer, blind or visually impaired voters are unable to take advantage of Ohio’s electronic accessible ballot-marking system; and

WHEREAS, in other states technology exists and is being used today in actual elections to enable registered voters to receive their electronic ballots immediately upon request and to deliver their ballots without having to print them; an

WHEREAS, voters who serve in the military or citizens who live overseas (so-called UOCAVA voters) already have the opportunity to submit their voted ballots using fax, email, or a secure web portal; and

WHEREAS, as much as Ohio’s accessible ballot-marking system represents a significant improvement for blind or visually impaired voters who want to mark the printed absentee ballot in complete privacy, it possesses three significant deficiencies:

1. Blind or visually impaired voters who do not have a printer or convenient access to a printer cannot use the accessible ballot-marking system,

2. Blind or visually impaired voters who submit online requests for their accessible ballots must wait before they can vote  for an email, which may not be sent,

3. Blind and visually impaired voters in many cases must request sighted assistance to prepare the ballot to be mailed: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio in convention assembled this 7th day of November, 2020, that this organization call upon the Governor, the Ohio State Legislature, and the Secretary of State to work with the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio and other interested parties to

 1. Design or procure a system whereby blind or visually impaired voters can request an accessible ballot to be made available to them electronically as soon as early voting starts and have that ballot displayed on their screens immediately after they have been verified

2, Design or procure a secure system through which voted ballots can be submitted electronically, thus eliminating the need for blind or visually impaired voters to own or find a printer, or to request  sighted assistance before returning vote-by-mail ballots.